

Case Study: Minnesota State University Mankato

Big ideas. Real world thinking in the future tense.

Summary of the Case Study: Minnesota State University Mankato - Leveraging a Leadership Transition to Accelerate Transformation Forward to 2030 and Beyond. This case traces the transition in transformative leadership at MSU Mankato, the regional comprehensive state university located in the Southern Minnesota region. The case describes the accomplishments and outcomes of the nineteen-year leadership of President Richard Davenport from 2002-2021. This foundation is in process of being leveraged and enhanced by the new President Edward Inch. He assumed the presidency near the end of Covid, framing the imperative to transform which is being reflected in a new strategic plan, Destination 2030.

The case demonstrates the power of several key factors in Mankato's success:

- investing in data analytics and leveraging them to optimize student success,
- strong commitment to DEI and eliminating the race gap in student success,
- changes in organizational culture and the ongoing evolution of the role of planners and analysts into “transformation architects,”
- active partnerships focusing on regional economic development and entrepreneurship,
- continuing education focusing on workforce skills, and
- commitment to “thinking in the future tense.”

This case also describes leadership's ongoing efforts to respond to the inability of many members of the campus community to get beyond “restoring the old normal” so they can refocus on potentially transformed aspirations. This is a challenge faced by most higher education institutions today.



President Richard Davenport navigated through almost two decades of rapid change seeing the rise in state-of-the-art learning environments, sustainability opportunities, major campus building boom, building a more diverse campus, and building regional connections including a Strategic Partnership Center to serve as a resource for area entrepreneurs. His tenure saw dramatic growth in academics and the stature of the institution. It closed with one of the most dramatic pivots in the university's 150-year history, when urgent, immediate action was

required to address the challenges of the Covid pandemic. Davenport's legacy included building a strong foundation of data, analytics, and deep insight into the importance of integrated, holistic planning and the coordinated execution of strategies. Progress was made in increasing students and employees of color over the past five years.

President Inch arrived in July 2021 with the challenge of providing the next chapter of expeditionary strategies, visioning, and action – with an emphasis in focusing on the future. The institution confronted the collective trauma of Covid, adapted quickly to support students and staff, and now are facing what the new president is calling Destination 2030. The university plays a vital role in the health and vibrancy of its cities, region, and has the potential to elevate and transform the university and region. The focus is on the advances in strategic planning that grew from traditional planner to **transformative architect**. This enables a transformative journey that builds the foundation for a strong, resilient future.

Why Read This? There are more than 400 **public regional comprehensive universities** spread across the U.S. They are key contributors to regional prosperity and economic development. While each is distinctive, reflecting regional differences, threats, and opportunities, most face the same sort of challenges and changes that are being addressed by MSU Mankato. Many lost enrollments during Covid and have continued to decline afterward. Moreover, many of the regional publics are experiencing new presidencies coming on the heels of their COVID response. The new presidents will need to build on prior leadership successes, but they will be challenged to redouble their attention on the transformation imperative forward to 2030 and beyond. They will also need to overcome the tendency of many stakeholders to hope for restoring the old normal rather than thinking in the future tense.

The full extent of MSU Mankato's transformations will be revealed in its orchestration of President Inch's emerging vision and strategies. This case is an excellent example of such a work in progress and will be updated regularly to capture fresh accomplishments and transformations.



The Case Study

Minnesota State University, Mankato (MSU or MNSU), also known as **Minnesota State**, is a public university in Mankato, Minnesota. It is one of 32 campuses in the Minnesota State System. Established as the Second State Normal School in 1858, it was designated in Mankato in 1866, and officially opened as Mankato Normal School in 1868. It is the second oldest member of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. It is also the second largest university in the state and has over 123,000 living alumni worldwide. It is the most comprehensive of the seven state universities and is referred to as the flagship of the Minnesota State Colleges and Universities system. It is an important part of the economy of Southern Minnesota and the state as it adds more than \$781 million to the economy of Minnesota annually.

MNSU operates three additional locations: two in the Twin Cities and the other in the Iron Range. Through the College of Extended Learning it provides bachelor's degrees at the Normandale Partnership Center in Bloomington, MN and programs online.

Background, Mission, Vision, and Core Values

In 2021-2023, MNSU was recognized as the Gold Best College/University in Minnesota by the *Star Tribune*. “Minnesota State University, Mankato has a 153-year history of helping students pursue big ideas through real-world thinking. Their focus is on student support, welcoming diversity, and providing hands-on experiences.” [2023 Best Colleges in Minnesota - Niche](#)

Informed and inspired by Arthur Levine and Scott Van Pelt's *Great Upheaval*, Minnesota State University Mankato built on the transformation of the knowledge economy, how higher ed will need to transform as knowledge generators, learner-centric, and focussed on student as center versus institution as the center.

“The United States is in the midst of a profound transformation the likes of which hasn't been seen since the Industrial Revolution when America's classical colleges adapted to meet the needs of an emerging industrial economy. Today, as the world shifts to an increasingly interconnected knowledge economy, the intersecting forces of technological innovation, globalization, and demographic change create vast new challenges, opportunities, and uncertainties. In this great upheaval, the nation's most enduring social institutions are at a crossroads.” Levine and Van Pelt, 2021.

Moving Boldly into the Future - Timeline and Stages of Development

MNSU's story is one of long-term leadership, insight and innovation, building on the foundation of a strong data-based environment, and leadership transition in a time of turbulent change. Figure 1 on the following page provides a timeline of MNSU and the eras and transitions it has made over the terms of Presidents Davenport and Inch. It also portrays the four key focal points that have strategically positioned the University to embark on transformation for the world of 2030.

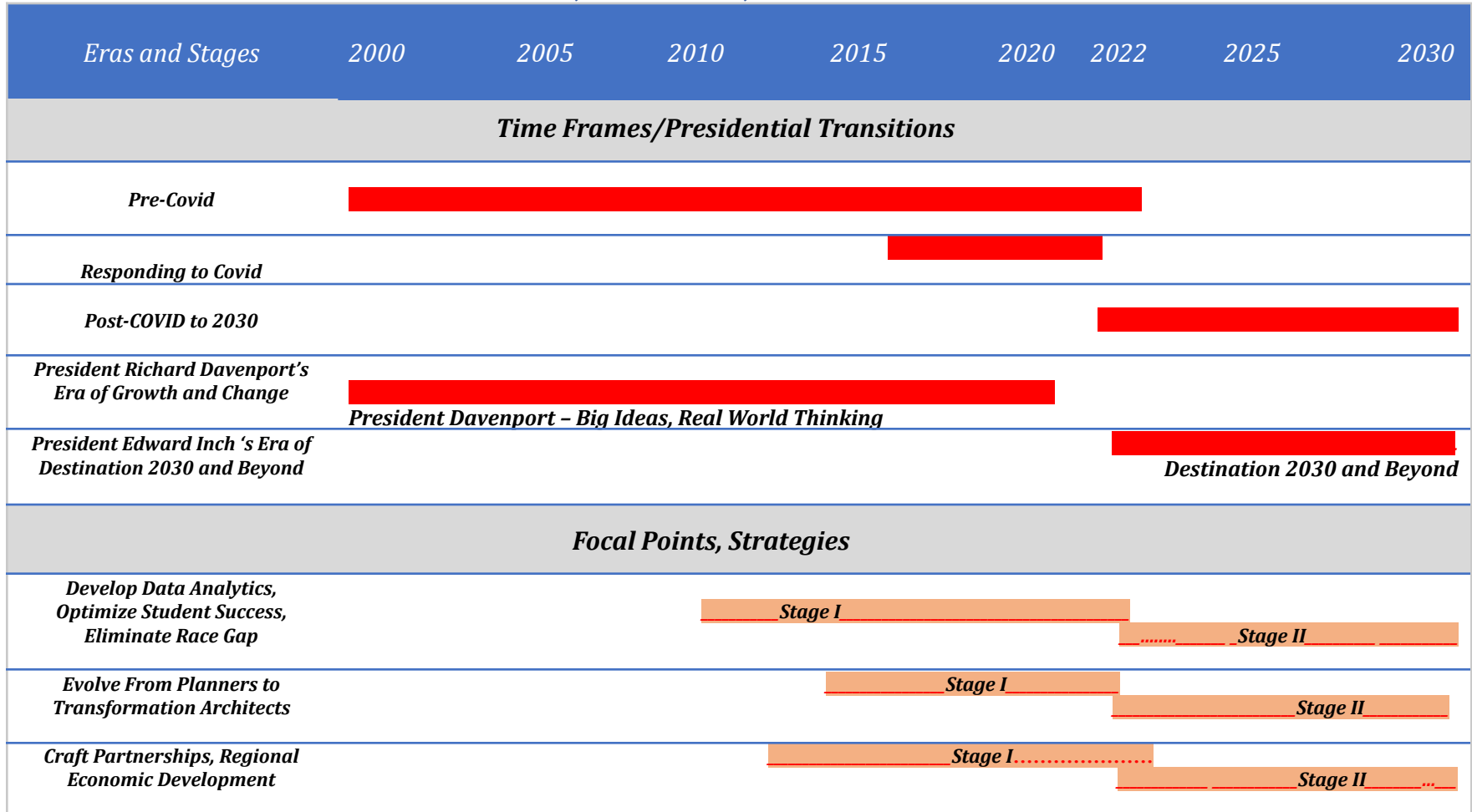
Pre-COVID, President Davenport's Leadership – Big Ideas. Real World Thinking

Part of the power of the MSU Mankato case study is the focus on the long-term presidency of Dr. Richard Davenport, who served the institution from 2002-2021. Over these nineteen years, President Davenport navigated through nearly two decades of rapid change seeing the rise in state-of-the-art learning environments, sustainability opportunities, major campus building boom, building a more diverse campus, and building regional connections including a Strategic Partnership Center to serve as a resource for area entrepreneurs. His tenure saw dramatic growth in academics and the stature of the institution and closed with the biggest challenge faced by a president in the university's history.

At the close of his tenure, one of the most dramatic pivots in the university's 150-year history came with the Covid Pandemic, when Davenport led urgent, immediate action.

During Davenport's first year in 2002, he determined that his priorities would be to challenge himself and the University to strengthen diversity, enhance graduate education, energize undergraduate research and build distance learning. He expanded the offerings of doctoral programs. His tenure saw large construction projects including the student union and campus athletic facilities. Major upgrades to the residential life facilities and a science center. In 2017, the Strategic Partnership Center opened in downtown Mankato to enhance the university presence in the city and to serve as a resource for entrepreneurs, students, and non-students.

Figure 1
Eras, Transitions, and Focal Points



To reach non-traditional students and expand the university's reach to the Twin Cities, Davenport initiated the development of an educational center 90 miles from the campus that offers graduate, undergraduate and doctoral degrees. Mankato also strengthened its partnership with metro-based Normandale Community College for two-plus-two opportunities. This move also became a base for major business and industry partnerships.

Davenport had tremendous commitment to diversity. In five years, diversity grew by 153%. Progress was made in the percentage of students and employees of color. By all accounts, President Davenport and the University were facing a strong beginning to 2020. Then came what was to be the largest challenge of Davenport's professional life.

Responding to Covid

The university was faced with creating an immediate response to the pandemic. This required quick action, not always a trait of institutional decision making. Davenport determined that the health of students, staff, faculty, and others were foremost in the process. In a matter of three weeks, more than 3,000 classes shifted from classrooms, labs and lecture halls to the kitchens, basements and bedrooms of student and professors, all connected online. And while not perfect, it worked. Focusing on student success from pre-pandemic times continued into the emergency pandemic planning.

In March 2020, Akey said, "suddenly our students had to leave campus for the most part and that everyone was lacking this connection that we had previously enjoyed. There was a real sense that we needed to reach out to our students as we were going through this massive transformation to remote learning." Akey and her team recruited staff from around the University to make calls, take questions and work to get them answered. Within a month, nearly every student had been contacted—and Davenport made sure he was involved in taking and answering questions."

As fall registration approached, a similar approach was used with calls to all students to inquire about their registration and return to campus. "The result: in the midst of the pandemic, the University's enrollment actually grew at a time when most universities saw declines." Much of the success was attributed to everyone contributing to connecting with students, seeking answers to their questions and reassuring them that the university was ready for them to return to campus. In fact, numbers of degrees, certificates, and diplomas awarded was at the highest level in the past five years in FY2021. Excerpts from *The Davenport Era* in TODAY.MNSCU.EDU Tougas, 19.



Transition to President Inch's Leadership – Thinking in the Future Tense

President Inch arrived in July 2021 with the challenge of providing the next chapter of future expeditionary strategies, visioning, and action. During his inaugural convocation speech, Inch spoke of Destination 2030.

“For the past year and a half, we have experienced the collective trauma of the COVID pandemic. It forced us to confront the brutal realities of need, equity gaps, racism, separation, among so many others. Our university adapted quickly to support our students. We redesigned our instructional delivery, policies, and infrastructure as we transitioned from in-person instruction to remote delivery in isolation from one another. The separation our community lived through was challenging. Yet, we did well because, in our community, we care for one another, and our passion for our students' success was paramount, and it made a difference.” Convocation Speech August 16, 2021

He acknowledged that the university plays a vital role in the health and vitality of our cities, region, and state throughout its history since 1868. He said that everyone has a positive and meaningful story to tell about the work we do. And that through strategic partnerships in the community have the potential to elevate and transform our university and region even more. To set the stage for Destination 2030, he asked the assembly “Where do we want to go? What do we want to build?” “Who are we going to evolve to be able to reach that next level to achieve what we need to for us, for our community, and most importantly for our students?”

For President Inch, the theme “our destination” means two things. “First, we will be a destination of choice for a diverse and capable student body. And we will be a steward of our place engaging our communities. The second meaning for ‘destination’ is what we will aspire to be, design, and build as we imagine Destination 2030, in our next comprehensive plan.” Convocation Speech, August 16, 2021

Focus 2030. In 2021, President Inch shared the convocation stage with the president of the student senate who also addressed the audience. With a laser focus on the future tense in higher education, Inch determined that colleges and universities across the nation are grappling with many complex issues. By early 2023, Inch had worked with the students, campus, community, and stakeholders to identify the themes for Destination 2030. These include:

- 1. Leader in transformational learning and inspired action**
- 2. Provider of lifetime access to an equitable and affordable education**
- 3. Community of care that is built upon diversity, inclusion and belonging**
- 4. Nimble and innovative steward of resources**

When asked what skills are required to think in the future-tense, Inch replied that he grew up learning Latin and Greek, but also chess. Chess provided a mindset to think in the future, anticipating and planning for the opponent's moves and strategy. He said that reading science fiction provided alternative realities to ponder and provide insight. Inch realizes that it's difficult to think and act in the future tense. It takes optimism, creative insight, and a future vision. Many seem unable to think beyond a year or two in advance. This may be due to the

ongoing and relentless challenges people are facing with Covid and other world events. His challenge will be to provide opportunities to expand mindsets and create an environment for multiple approaches to being a university in the future.

In his “listening tour” with members of the university community, President Inch noted that the aspirations of many faculty and staff focused on returning to normalcy and “new” ideas they had been aspiring to before Covid. This tendency reinforced the importance of “thinking in the future tense” in ways that will illuminate future-focused opportunities and raise the bar for future aspirations and opportunities.

Investment in Data Analytics for Student Success

Davenport was aware of the demographic challenges facing MSU, a regional university servicing a sparsely populated area. He knew that they had to address the demographic challenges for survival. He felt there were things they weren’t understanding about underrepresented students. Why were they failing these students? He developed a division for underrepresented enrollment management and combined IR, planning and student retention.

Davenport promoted Lynn Akey to Vice President for Student Success, Analytics, and Integrated Planning. This promotion followed her positions from Director of Institutional Assessment to Director of IR, Planning and Assessment, to Assistant VP for Institutional Research, Planning and Assessment, to Associate VP for Institutional Research, Strategy and Effectiveness. The promotion to VP for Student Success, Analytics, and Integrated Planning in February 2019 provided Akey the position at a Cabinet level versus a position that reported to the Provost. This signaled the overall importance of strategic planning across the entire institution and provided the president the platform to strengthen the use of data in decision making.

President Davenport charged Akey with student success, analytics and integrated planning. She organized and led the pandemic responses around the theme “demonstrating care in interactions with students.” Students were checked on, guided, and directed toward help when falling behind. These connections created learning lifelines. That connection was orchestrated through the massive transformation to remote learning, said Akey. Recruiting staff from across the institution, calls were made to almost every student. The team looked at the problems and worked to address them.

He provided Dr. Lynn Akey with the responsibility, authority, and tools to systematically build the data system to address the retention challenge. Dr. Lynn Akey is now the Vice President for Student Success, Analytics, and Integrated Planning. Her twenty-year tenure in strategic planning reflects the transforming nature of planning that moves from institutional research with the important focus on reporting after-the-fact information and responding to data requests, to a specialized skill set of analytics, prediction, foresight, insight, and scenario planning. The change in titles and responsibilities reflect the changing nature of planning in the 21st century as campuses now move with more action towards the future. Davenport brought Akey to the Cabinet table of decision-making as a critical voice for the future of the institution.

Starting with the 2016-2021 Strategic Plan, President Davenport realized that the most important thing for MNSU was to break up the existing structures and silos and put Lynn in charge of the new comprehensive unit. Progress had been affected by a fragmented approach to planning. In addition, Davenport used reserve funds to hire all the staff to begin to build the data capacity and infrastructure. He said that this investment has been repaid many times over. In 2019 they were 3.5% away from closing the gap when Covid hit.

2022 Foundation for Thinking in the Future Tense

Coming into 2022, President Inch had inherited a solid foundation of strengths to be leveraged forward to 2030.

*Figure 2
Building on the Foundation in 2022*



Sense of Urgency, Focus on Organizational Capacity in Data Analytics

Mankato had clearly developed a sense of urgency in developing data analytics for student success, focusing on improving DEI, and building a new information infrastructure. Interview with Lynn Akey VP Student Success, Analytics, and Integrated Planning in spring 2022.

“MSU Mankato has focused on improving student success for years, with limited to no success. It was frustrating. It was time for a transformative change in how we were going about the work of student success.

In reflection, we discovered that we spent several years approaching student success as a collection of efforts chipping away at the margins of our work. Our experience and current research in the field suggests collections of discrete initiatives were not going to get us to where we needed to go. We had to begin working smarter with our limited fiscal, human, and technology resources to make a difference in student success.

Make no mistake, everyone was working hard, but we needed to work smarter, we needed someone truly focused on this most important priority.”

Evolution of Transformation Architect Role

As we developed the Mankato Case Study, we discovered a major insight. We realized that an important evolution was occurring in the role of planner. The institution had a strong traditional Institutional Research Office. Functions included generating reports and supporting individual initiatives. As the critical need for data and analytics for decision making became clearer, the role of a “transformation architect” emerged. The functionality and skill sets of traditional planners experienced a jump shift. Individuals were trained in the use of current and future-oriented analytics. MSU elevated the planning role to the VP for Analytics, Student Success, and Integrated Planning. Figure 3 describes the differences between the traditional planner and the transformation architect.

***Figure 3
Evolution of the Transformation Architect Role***

<i>Traditional Role</i>	<i>Emerging Role</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Traditional IR and Planning Role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Elevate to VP for Planning and Student Success</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Siloed Planning 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Holistic Planning Across the Institution</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Individual Initiatives 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Many Coordinated, Integrated Initiatives</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IR Pays Support Role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Coordinate Task Forces and Planning Groups across the Institution</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IR Plays Support Role 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Jump Shift from Support Role to Facilitate, Influence, and Inspire Transformative Change</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IR Unschooled in Change Management, Organizational Culture 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Focus attention on Change Management, including Human and Cultural Aspects</i>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● IR Not Significantly Involved in Talent Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Talent Development of Planning Participants</i>

Existing Organizational Structures and Partnerships for Economic Prosperity and Regional Revitalization

During President Davenport's years of service, MNSU developed a solid foundation of partnerships for economic prosperity and regional revitalization. These included:

- ***Division of Strategic Business Education.*** An organizational unit at MSA Mankato dealing with partnerships, grants, technology services, continuing education and professional development, site-based delivery, internships/co-ops. Also manages a ***Small Business Development Center*** providing business and entrepreneurial services.
- ***Strategic Partnership Center.*** Works with businesses and communities globally to create mutually beneficial connections resulting in a well equipped workforce and improved economic health for the region. A strong example is the South Central Community Navigator which engages Mainstream Businesses Focused on Food and Agriculture (MBFFA) a new program from the U.S. Small Business Program and authorized by Section 5004 of the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021.
- ***Center for Workforce Professional Education.*** Aligns with President Davenport's Goal of Impacting the Food/Agriculture Industry and Entrepreneurship in Region 9. Success stories: Mankato Clinic and Christensen Farms.
- ***University Extended Campus - Global Education Dean.*** Nurtures partnerships with 8 international universities in the Netherlands, Finland, Indonesia, Japan, Kenya, Mexico, South Korea.
- ***Center for Innovation and Entrepreneurship.*** Brings together existing innovation and entrepreneurship programs, helps nurture academic and continuing education and innovation and entrepreneurship, facilitates student projects, and serves as a resource in elevating faculty innovation and research expertise.
- ***College of Business (CoB) Partnerships.*** CoB nurtures multi-level engagement (faculty, staff, students, scholarship, financial aid) with a range of enterprises in the region.

Competences and Adult Learning for Food and Agriculture Industries

Over time, MNSU has developed strong relationships with employers in the Food and Agriculture Industries in Southern Minnesota. These were strengthened during the challenges of the Covid era. These partnerships included face-to-face learning in feed processing plants and skills development programs.

These efforts can be leveraged forward to 2030 to deal with the considerable reskilling and upskilling needs that will likely be needed to build the workforce in these industries and in other industries as well. Linkages need to be made between adult learning and MNSU's core

academic programs. Competence building, micro-credentialing, and adult learning will be important tools for MNSU in moving forward in all of these areas.

Commitment to Thinking in the Future Tense

President Inch's declared intention to think in the future tense is critical to MNSU's capacity to deal with the transformative challenges of the next decade. Dr. Inch's vision and commitment to think and plan in the future-tense continued to develop through 2022-2023. They build on a clear analysis of the trends in higher education and the needs of the students served, the campus and the region. President Davenport's development of a sound, adaptive structure and infrastructure for strategic planning, strong data analytics support, solid partnerships, and defining a breakthrough role for a "transformation architect" who was to take a proactive leadership role in facilitating and coordinating a holistic set of strategies and initiatives.

The past, present and future come together in this combination of elements of President Davenport's foundation, structures, and roles have been combined with President Inch's vision and sense of planning in the future tense to create the 2023-2030 Strategic Plan.



Moving Forward to 2030 - Data Analytics, Transformation Architect, Partnerships

Figure 4 compares the evolution of data analytics, the transformation architect, and partnerships from 2010 through 2021 with the potential evolutions that may be possible forward to 2030.

Figure 4
Potential Developments Out to 2030

Stage I (2010-2021)	Stage II (2022 - 2030)
Data Analytics and Student Success	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Invest in Data/Analytics</i> ● <i>Nurture a Culture of Evidence</i> ● <i>Elevate IR/Planner Role to VP for Student Success, Analytics, and Integrated Planning</i> ● <i>Focus on Optimizing Student Success</i> ● <i>Commit to Eliminating the “Race Gap” in Persistence, Completion, and Retention</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Increase Investment in Analytics, Simulation, Artificial Intelligence</i> ● <i>Culture of Performance and Productivity Improvement</i> ● <i>VP for Student Success, Analytics, and Integrated Planning Recognized as Transformation Architect, Others Play Parts of the Role</i> ● <i>Expand Student Success Focus to Include Emphasis on Pathfinding, 60-Year Career</i> ● <i>Expand to Include Career Success, as Well as Academic Success</i>
From Traditional Planner to Transformation Architect	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Invest in Data Analytics</i> ● <i>Nurture a Culture of Evidence</i> ● <i>Elevate IR/Planner Role to VP for Student Success, Analytics, and Integrated Planning</i> ● <i>Focus on Optimizing Student Success</i> ● <i>Commit to Eliminating the “Race Gap” in Persistence, Completion, and Retention</i> ● <i>Focus on Implementing Strategic Plans</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Increase Investment in Analytics, Simulation, and Artificial Intelligence</i> ● <i>Nurture a Culture of Performance and Productivity Improvement</i> ● <i>VP for Student Success, Analytics, and Integrated Planning is Recognized as Transformation Architect, and Others Play Parts of the Role</i> ● <i>Expand Student Success to Include a Focus on Pathfinding During Careers of 60-Years or More</i> ● <i>Expand Closing the Race Gap to Include Career Success, as Well as Academic Success</i> ● <i>Elevate Implementation of Plans to Become Orchestrating Transformative Strategies and Change</i>
Partnerships of All Kinds	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Partnership in Economic Development, Regional Revitalization, and Entrepreneurship</i> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Fully Integrate Such Partnerships into Holistic University Planning</i> ● <i>Extend Technology Partnerships to Include Microcredential, 60-Year Curriculum, Apprenticeships/Co-op Experiences</i> ● <i>Expand Regional Revitalization Focus to Include Even More Partners - Education, Government, Employers, Workforce Boards, NGOs</i>

Evolution of Strategic Planning

Figure 5 illustrates the shifting focal points of MNSU's two strategic plans, 2016-21 and 2022-2030.

Figure 5
Evolution of Strategic Planning – Focal Points of Strategic Plans

Big Ideas. Real World Thinking ***2016-21 Goals***

Strategic Direction #1: Enhance Student Success and Completion

- 1) Provide a transformative, student-centered evidence-based advising experience,
- 2) Provide all entering first-year and transfer students with an experience centered on student engagement, development, retention, completion, and life success,
- 3) Remove internal barriers to student success, 4) Become a recognized leader among peers for student success.

Strategic Direction #2: Elevate Faculty Distinction and Academic Achievement

- 1) Establish a systematic collection of information on academic achievement, expertise, and leadership,
- 2) Communicate university distinctions and academic achievements;
- 3) Raise academic profile of MNSU as an applied doctoral granting institution.

Strategic Direction #3: Advancing a Culture of Evidence and Innovative Organizational Designs

- 1) Implement systems, structures, and professional development that embeds continuous improvement and innovation at all levels,
- 2) Enacted integrated data governance and strategy,
- 3) Realize coordinated institutional data systems that support decision making

Strategic Direction #4: Expanding Regional and Global Impact

- 1) Implement a strategic plan to increase enrollment, retention, and completion in Metro area programs,
- 2) Implement strategic plan for student success for online programs,
- 3) advance study abroad programs,
- 4) Increase international programs,
- 5) Enhance internationalization of campus and local community.

Strategic Direction #5: Leading Equity and Inclusive Excellence

- 1) Provide inviting, safe, and supportive environment for people from diverse backgrounds and perspectives,
- 2) Provide equitable access and opportunities for all students,
- 3) Provide opportunities to improve intercultural competence for a complex, diverse, and globalized society.

Strategic Direction #6: Leveraging the Power of Partnerships and Collaboration

- 1) Develop governance reporting, and communication structures for university partnerships and collaborations,
- 2) Engage in partnership solicitation and cultivation,
- 3) Establish the University as a “partner of choice,”
- 4) Leverage the presence and value of strategic partnerships.

Moving forward from a culture of evidence to a culture of transformation, thinking in the future tense and performance improvement.

Figure 6

Minnesota State University Mankato Destination 2030

Decision 2030 Goals

Leader in transformational learning and inspired action

- Expand equitable high impact learning and engagement practices.
- Engage strategic partners in advancing and providing high impact experiences.
- Advance a culture of learning by embedding high impact experiences early in academic coursework and career exploration.
- Provide learning environments that close educational equity gaps across race and ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location

Provider of lifetime access to an equitable and affordable education

- Execute a Strategic Diversity, Equity and Inclusion Plan encompassing all areas of the university.
- Establish a portfolio of learning credentials and experiences offered by the university attracting and serving students at all stages of a lifetime.
- Expand transfer of credit and credit for prior learning.
- Develop guaranteed tuition programs.
- Provide comprehensive need-based institutional grant programs to support students in financial stress.

Community of care that is built upon diversity, inclusion and belonging

- Establish university onboarding for all members of the University that introduces Maverick culture, expectations for culturally responsive support and success, and critical milestones for achievement.
- Provide tailored support systems for all members of the University addressing barriers and gaps in success and campus climate.
- Develop cohesive and comprehensive online sites focused on domains of holistic wellness.
- Engage faculty and staff in professional development opportunities to support teaching, advising, mentoring, and coaching *that are culturally responsive*.
- Adopt a strategic approach to advising, mentoring, coaching, and alumni connections for all students across all years of enrollment.
- Expand intentional and coordinated opportunities for students to engage with individualized success networks and resources such as learning services, advising, and success coaching.
- Partner with the greater Mankato area to ensure globally responsive and supportive community offerings.

Nimble and innovative steward of resources

- **Financial.** Establish a university budget prioritization and decision-making process to fund the priorities, innovations, and goals of the strategic plan
- **Physical and Environmental.** Invest in the use of renewables as an energy source to reduce carbon footprint and move toward net zero. Perform biennial reviews and develop plans establishing the university as a leader in environmental sustainability.
- **Human Resources.** Attract, support, and retain talent with a focus on equity and a workforce that represents our state population. Develop a model of student employment that compliments enrollment and workforce goals.
- **Technology Resources.** Reduce administrative workload by leveraging Workday, customer relationship management, and workflow automation tools, Prioritize automation of processes not addressed by the Workday migration. Invest in and utilize technology supporting equitable classroom learning, advising, and student support wherever or however academic offerings are provided
- **Academic/Curricular.** Redesign processes to increase efficiencies in curriculum development, program, and course credit and non-credit offerings reducing instructional and non-salary costs. Incentivize faculty experimentation in curricular offerings, instructional strategies, and scholarly work to meet the needs of learners and eliminate equity gaps.
- **External Revenue.** Develop and expand approaches to external revenue generation. Generate resources supporting student scholarships and faculty positions.

Moving Forward to 2030: Orchestrating the Execution of Change

Figure 7 portrays the five elements of orchestrating transformative change and their potential at MSU Mankato..

Figure 7
Potential for Orchestrating Elements of Transformation

Needed Elements of Transformative Change	
Leadership	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>A New Breed of Leadership – ethical, courageous, ability to see and seize opportunity, superior communication and engagement. Also inclusive, empathetic, and centered. Data savvy.</i> ● <i>President must develop capacity to be a “Shape Shifter” for their enterprise</i> ● <i>VP Strategy and Student Success must develop as Transformation Architect and teach others</i>
Analytics	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Continue to invest in embedded analytics for optimizing student success and foresight.</i> ● <i>Enhance the capacity of faculty and staff to utilize analytics and augmented intelligence.</i>
Executing Expeditionary Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Expand existing strategies to capture the importance of transformations in work and learning.</i> ● <i>Expand strategies to transform degree programs and introduce micro credentials, all to meet the needs of lifelong learning for a changing workforce.</i> ● <i>Evolve existing strategic directions into “expeditionary” strategies – continuously evolving.</i> ● <i>Consciously pursue a strategy of preparing students to thrive in the coming world of 2030.</i>
Building Organizational Capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Intentionally develop the talents of faculty, staff, students to leverage augmented intelligence, enhancing their productivity, speed, and agility.</i> ● <i>Reinvent processes and policies to support the changing tools of the learning and work ecosystem.</i>
Changing Organizational Culture	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● <i>Consciously develop the University’s organizational culture to think in the future tense, plan from the future backward, and nimbly adapt its strategies to changing conditions.</i> ● <i>Focus on changing perspectives and behaviors of leadership, staff, faculty, and other University stakeholders to thrive in the 2030 environment.</i>

Summary of MSU Mankato Case Study

Figure 8
Summary: MSU Mankato Case Study

Key Factors	MSU Actions Taken (and Projected)	
Sense of Urgency	<p>President Davenport and his team developed a sense of urgency to deal with the challenge of optimizing student success and addressing the race gap in retention, persistence, and completion: 1) built a data-informed sense of urgency for transformation, 2) developed a transformation campaign used a tested approach, 3) designed expeditionary strategies to advance change, and 4) launched measurement to gauge the achievement of outcomes.</p> <p>They took decisive action to integrate student services, invested in analytics, and elevated the role of functions of the VP for Student Success, Analytics, and Integrated Planning. President Inch enhanced this Sense of Urgency by emphasizing the need to “Think in the Future Tense” and focus strategic planning on “Destination 2030.”</p>	
Foresight and Vision	<p>President Inch is focusing on “Thinking in the Future Tense,” trying to envision the world of 2030 and planning backward from there to set goals and pathways for the university. Student success, broadly defined to include success in careers for the world of 2030, is a top priority. This will involve assessing and streamlining existing programs, but also creating new micro credentials and pathways and expanding its continuing learning capacity to deal with careers spanning 60 years or more. It will also involve building on its current partnerships and programs for regional economic revitalization.</p>	
Guiding Coalition	<p>Both the 2016-2021 planning effort and the 2022-2030 used Task Forces/Planning Teams to create their integrated institutional plans. A similar effort group handled the integration of student service activities.</p>	
Strategies and Action Plans	<p>Goals from 2016-2021 Strategic Plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Enhancing Student Success and Completion 2.Elevating Faculty Distinction/Academic Achievement 3.Expanding Regional and Global Impact 4.Leading Equity and Inclusive Excellence 5.Advancing culture of evidence/innovative organizational designs 6.the Power of Partnerships and Collaboration 	<p>Goals from 2023-2030 Strategic Plan</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1.Leader in transformational learning and inspired action 2.Provider of lifetime access to an equitable and affordable education 3.Community of care that is built upon diversity, inclusion, and belonging. 4.Nimble and innovative steward of resources
Quick Wins, Continuing Wins	<p>President Inch began his tenure with a “listening tour” to determine the assessments of strengths and personal aspirations of a broad cross-section of the university community. From the Destination 2030 plan, a variety of wins will be specified.</p>	
Action Roadmap: Leading and Navigating Change	<p>Destination 2030 will provide the basis for an expeditionary action map to lead, navigate, and orchestrate transformative change.</p>	
Organizational Capacity to be Built	<p>By 2022, the university had made a substantial investment in new facilities, information technology and data analytics, and partnerships to enhance economic prosperity and revitalization in its region. Forward to 2030, the university will need to develop both the talents of faculty, staff, and students and the organizational capacity to thrive in the 2030 world.</p>	
4 R’s of Transformation – Realign, Redesign, Redefine, Reengineer	<p>The university has transformed (redesigned, realigned, redefined, and reengineered) its approach to optimizing student success, leveraging data analytics. External relationships and partnerships have been realigned with the changing needs of the region and the emerging workforce, with a special focus on the Food and Agriculture industry. President Inch has articulated his strategic intent to streamline the portfolio of existing programs and rethink the need for new programs, pathways, and experiences.</p>	
Culture Change	<p>MSU Mankato needs to build from a culture of evidence to a culture of transformation, thinking in the future tense, and performance improvement. This will require jump shifts in mind set, behaviors, skills, tools, processes, and outcomes.</p>	
Learnings from MSU Mankato	<p>MSU Mankato is a regional public comprehensive university, with a new president coming on the heels of Covid, embracing the transformation imperative, and launching a Destination 2030 journey to do so. He is also having to overcome the difficulty many faculty and staff have in “breaking free from the old normal” and “thinking in the future tense.” This will be a useful case for leaders at the other 400 public comprehensives to follow.</p>	

Mankato State University Moving Forward to 2030

The full extent of MSU Mankato's transformations will be revealed in its orchestration of President Inch's emerging vision and strategies. This case is an excellent example of such a work in progress and will be updated regularly to capture fresh accomplishments and transformations.



There are more than 400 **public regional comprehensive universities** spread across the U.S. They are key contributors to regional prosperity, equality, and economic development. While each is distinctive, reflecting regional differences, threats, and opportunities, most face the same sort of challenges and changes that are being addressed by MSU Mankato. Moreover, many will experience new presidencies coming on the heels of their COVID response. The new presidents will need to build on prior leadership successes, but they will be challenged to redouble their attention on the transformation imperative forward to 2030 and beyond. They will also need to overcome the tendency of many stakeholders to hope for restoring the old normal rather than thinking in the future tense.

The continuing saga of Mankato will be an excellent example for the leaders of these types of institutions as they grapple with the challenges of the next decade. Mankato State has been highlighted in the Minnesota State System for its use of analytics and actions that have resulted in stable enrollment while the rest of the state is experiencing declines in 2022-2023.

